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Jordan

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Narrative

FAIRS Country Report

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Report Highlights:

This report covers updates to Jordan's food and agricultural import regulations and standards.

Section I. Food Laws:

Jordan has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 2000. The accession to membership coincided with structural reforms, economic and legislative, designed to match international standards and requirements. As a result, the current food control regime in Jordan falls under two laws: The Agriculture Law No. 44 of 2002 and Jordanian Food Control Law No. 32 of 2003. These laws were adopted at the Aqaba Special Economic Customs Center in May 2002 and at Amman Customs Center in January 2004.

Inspection criteria are codified into a computerized system. This system has been applied at all border centers should the infrastructure for these centers is completed. A border committee comprised of representatives from the following agencies inspects imported agricultural and food products:

- The Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA: www.jfda.jo),
- Ministry of Agriculture (MoA: www.moa.gov.jo),
- Customs department (JCD: www.customs.gov.jo).

The Jordan Institute for Standards and Metrology (JISM www.jism.gov.jo), has recently confined its role on food by only regulation and standards leaving testing and decision process to JFDA. Food products are classified in three tiers according to the associated health risk. The criteria and the levels of inspection are based on three categories: high, medium and low risk.

- High-risk products 80 – 100 percent inspection
- Medium risk products 25 – 50 percent inspection
- Low risk products 5 – 10 percent inspection

In all cases a document review is mandatory regardless of the category or level of inspection.

Importers are required to insure safety for any human health hazards associated with trade in a form of microbial, parasitical and fungal contamination. Import consignments are routinely tested for radiation levels and chemical contaminants, including heavy metals, hormones and residue from medicines. Food additives are determined by testing. Less frequent testing is done for pesticide residues.

Importers of drugs, including vaccines and sera for human use, are required to meet Ministry of Health's technical regulations. Importers of veterinary medicines, sera, vaccines, pesticides, meat, fertilizer, animal feed, and seedlings are required to meet Ministry of Agriculture technical regulations. A committee comprising officials from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and the customs department carry out inspections of food and agriculture products at the border. Jordan applies internationally recognized standards when these are available.

Section II. Labeling Requirements:

A. Labeling requirements are set by the Institute of Standards and Metrology.

Legal requirements for labeling are fairly standard although a statement of ingredients in order of prevalence is not required. All labels must either be in Arabic or have a stick-on label in Arabic. In general, the label should contain the name of the product, the manufacturer's name and address, net weight, fortifying matter (like added vitamins and minerals), lot number and "use before" or "best before" date. Local labeling requirements do not include Recommended Daily Intake (RDIs).

The law holds an importer fully accountable for shipment label contents. A shipment might be rejected based on ambiguous labeling content even if it is only a printing error.

Shelf life: This requirement was replaced by the "Best Before" standard, but a technical regulation issued by JISM does interpret "Best before" as expiry date, no food is permitted for sale if it's best before due.

B. Nutritional labeling is mandatory in certain categories of food including infant formula, food for dietary use, etc.

Web-site: www.jism.gov.jo

Section III. Packaging and Container Regulations:

No specific restrictions are applied to the type of packaging used. No restrictions are applied to either packaging or container type at the Port of Aqaba (**Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority** <http://www.aqabazone.com>). However, a maximum weight restriction of 30.5 tons is applied to the discharging of the container at the gantry crane of 30.5 tons. Units weighing more than 30.5 tons will be discharged using shore cranes.

There is no special municipal waste disposal law at the port. In case cargo needs to be disposed of, an application is filed at the concerned department at the port (i.e. customs, environment), and the request is approved or rejected according to the type of cargo and its expected damage to the environment (**Ministry of Environment** <http://www.moenv.gov.jo>).

Section IV. Food Additives Regulations:

Food additives are regulated by JISM and JFDA. In general, permissible additives and their concentrations are those approved by the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission. However, the technical standards for foods contain specific lists for food additive and their permissible levels of use. These standards should be consulted to make sure that additives are permitted.

Section V. Pesticides and Other Contaminants:

Pesticides in Jordan are regulated by Ministry of Agriculture (MoA www.moa.gov.jo), Plant Protection Directorate/ Pesticides Division. Each imported pesticide shall be analyzed for conformity in composition and concentration, using the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) standards if it is an agricultural pesticide, and using the World Health Organization (WHO) if it is a pesticide used for public health (Like Cockroach sprays, mosquito repellent, etc.)

Pesticides residue in the food chain in Jordan is a sensitive issue. There is only one laboratory in Jordan that is capable of testing for pesticide residues in fresh fruits and vegetables, and its turn-around time is about two weeks. Therefore, it is not possible to test fresh products and get a result before the fresh products are consumed. However, non-perishable local and imported agricultural products may be tested for pesticide residue. The technical standards for food and agricultural products require that a pesticide residue does not exceed the recommended maximum residue levels of the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission.

Section VI. Other Regulations and Requirements:

Any imported agricultural or food product may be inspected and tested to ensure that it is fit for human consumption. Virtually all prepared and mixed foods are tested at the border.

The JFDA has the authority to inspect food products at the retail and wholesale distribution levels. A representative may enter any place and collect samples for testing. If a product fails to meet technical requirements or is found unfit for human consumption, it is removed from distribution channels and destroyed.

Section VII. Other Specific Standards:

Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISM) is the official body for the preparation and publication of Jordanian Standards. The main tasks of JISM are to (i) prepare, approve, revise and amend Jordanian mandatory or voluntary standards and monitor their application; (ii) maintain a national system for metrology and supervise its implementation; (iii) approve quality marks and certificates of conformity; (v) adopt and approve standards of other countries and of Arab, regional and international organizations, provided that such standards were issued in Arabic or English; and (vi) to cooperate and coordinate with Arab, regional and international institutions in the area of standardization and metrology. JISM is a participating member of the Arab Organization for Industrial Development and Mining (AIDMO), a corresponding member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), a corresponding member of the International Organization for Legal Metrology (OIML), and a contact point for the *Codex Alimentarius* Commission.

All imported foods should conform to the Jordanian standards issued by JISM. All agricultural products may be imported by the private sector (wheat and barley has a unique situation that GoJ is the monopolistic buyer who sell to farmers at asubsidized price make it hard for competition by private sector) if the products meet local quality standards, which are set by JISM on the basis of the *Codex Alimentarius* (<http://www.codexalimentarius.net>, www.jism.gov.jo). In 2003, JISM instituted a pre-shipment inspection program, which is entirely voluntary for food importers. Import licenses are not required for most imported goods. Some products require prior approval from either the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Agricultural products for which prior approval is required from the Ministry of Agriculture are live animals, fresh, chilled and frozen meat, frozen animal semen, and powdered milk for adults and children.

Ministry of Agriculture requires a prior approval as a condition to ensure that the animals and animal products meet local health standards issued by JISM. Importation of rice, sugar, and wheat derivatives has been liberalized. The private sector may import these items into Jordan; Government of Jordan has relieved all these items from customs duties and taxes to ease the economic hardship on consumers, still the product has to meet local quality standards. Alcoholic beverages may be imported into Jordan, but high tariffs are applied (50-200 percent) – as a revenue source for the government.

Section VIII. Copyright and/or Trademark Laws:

The legal system facilitates and protects the acquisition and disposition of all property rights.

Prior to its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Jordan passed several new laws to improve the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR), patents, copyrights and trademarks. TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights)-consistent laws now protect trade secrets, plant varieties and semiconductor chip designs. The law requires registration of copyrights, patents and trademarks. Copyrights must be registered at the National Library, a part of the Ministry of Culture. Patents must be registered with the Registrar of Patents and Trademarks at the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Jordan is in the process of acceding to the Patent Cooperation Treaty and to the protocol relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the registration of marks, GoJ is preparing appropriate adjustments to fit the international requirements.

Jordan has been a full member of World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) since May 24, 2004, and a full member of Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), since October 24, 2004. So far 10 varieties have been registered by the office, one Jordanian and 9 American varieties.

Section IX. Import Procedures:

As a member of the WTO, Jordan must reduce its import tariff ceiling to 20 percent. Under the terms of the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (FTA), import duties and other trade barriers between Jordan and the United States must be phased out by 2010, with tariffs less than 5 percent having already been eliminated. Companies operating in the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs) gain quota and duty-free access to the U.S. market and benefit from special import provisions for raw inputs. (<http://www.justrade.jo/>). See also (WWW.CUSTOMS.GOV.JO).

CUSTOMS VALUATION:

The customs law of 1999 was amended in March 2000 to include GATT-compliant criteria for customs valuation (which is based on certified invoices) and to make the valuation process more transparent. The law restricts customs officers' mandate to use arbitrary valuation but still rewards those who uncover invoice misreporting and imposes penalties on importers.

The customs valuation price is CIF-based. The value of the imported good is converted into JD at the official central bank exchange rate (1 JD = USD 1.41). In some cases, invoice or export discounts have been included in the valuation by the customs department. Still, the exporter should consult the local importer to determine how to best grant any such discounts or rebates (www.customs.gov.jo).

IMPORT TAXES AND OTHER RELATED FEES:

Custom tariffs are based on the Harmonized System coding practice. Under the terms of the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the majority of tariffs are to be phased out over a 10-year period (year one being 2001.) The tariff schedule may be accessed at the following web site: (www.customs.gov.jo).

Imported products and locally produced goods are subject to a 16 percent value-added tax (VAT).

The VAT on imported products is based on the cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) value at the border. Goods such as pharmaceutical products and agricultural goods are exempt from the 16 percent sales tax. There is a special sales tax that applies to specific items such as, but not limited to, vehicles, tobacco products, alcoholic beverages and lubricants. The tax rate on these items varies. Tobacco products and alcoholic beverages are subject to a 13 percent general sales tax in addition to the special sales tax. Non-basic foodstuffs are subject to a 4 percent general sales tax. For a complete description of these commodities and detailed lists of the general and special sales tax, please visit Jordan's General Sales Tax Department's website at www.gst.gov.jo.

Import licenses are required for imports of:

- Non-commercial shipments exceeding JD 2,000 in value
- Biscuits of all types
- Mineral water
- Dried milk for industry
 - Items requiring prior clearance from specific authorities (for a complete list, see “**special import provisions**” below)

Goods entering the country under temporary entry status, bonded goods and goods benefiting from the investment promotion law are exempt from import licenses (refer to www.jordaninvestment.com).

All Jordanian and foreign trading companies must obtain an importer’s card from the Ministry of Industry and Trade for customs clearance purposes. At the Ministry, a complete and updated list of all import requirements and provisions is periodically issued. For non-trading entities such as banks, hospitals and hotels, the ministry issues a special, “limited” card that allows the import of goods specific to that entity’s purpose.

Import / Export Documentation

According to Article 31 of the Customs Law of 1998 and its amendments, every customs declaration must include the following:

- Maritime or air bill of lading.
 - Commercial invoice indicating value, weight, freight and insurance charges etc.
 - All invoices should be notarized by the Jordanian diplomatic mission in the country of origin. Certification by the local chamber of commerce is sufficient, subject to the approval of the customs department director, in cases where a Jordanian consulate is not available.
- A notarized certificate of origin issued by the relevant authority in the exporter's local area.
- Value declaration form for shipments exceeding JD 2,000 (USD 2,820).

The customs department may request other documents related to the shipment as needed.

All invoices should describe the imported goods in Arabic.

Jordan Customs developed and launched the Customs Integrated Tariff System (CITS) in Aug/2005; Web site: <http://www.customs.gov.jo> to assist importers. Importers can use this system to obtain import tariffs, import conditions and commodity trade agreements. For example, to determine custom tariffs for apples imported from the United States in June under Jordan–US FTA agreement, log into the CITS system for information pertaining to commodity trade, customs and tariff and commercial agreements as well as the governmental requirements for these commodities from the ministries and departments. The information in the June apples example will show that trade between USA and Jordan enjoy preferential treatment of lower customs tariff in June, while in July importers must pay extra *advalorem* fee (this measure is to protect local production), and approval of Ministry of Agriculture is required to import apples.

The (CITS) System allows an importer to review all regulations and requirements of the commodity’s trade; all (CITS) system information is in Arabic and English.

The (CITS) system provides information on the trade activity and mechanisms for searching for goods through the Customs Tariff Tables, trade agreements, coding decisions, proclamations, circulations and requirements related to the Customs Tariff Harmonized System.

Special Import Provisions

Pre-import clearance is required for certain goods. The clearance, once obtained, acts as an import license. However, these

clearances are not automatic.

The relevant pre-import license-issuing agency and the respective goods include:

Ministry of Industry and Trade (these are given out in the form of import licenses): rice, flour and its by-products, sugar, wheat, barely and corn;

Ministry of Agriculture: frozen animal semen, live animals, fresh/frozen meat, embalmed wild animals, imported milk products from countries engaged in bilateral trade protocols with Jordan;

Ministry of Health: all types of medical drugs and antibiotics, food supplements for athletes, potassium bromide, food dyes, frozen ice cream, baby food and mil.

If a shipment is rejected, there is an appeal system and this is subject to the approval of the ministry under which the rejection took place.

Appendix I. Government Regulatory Agency Contacts:

Jordan Food & Drug Directorate

Tel: (962-6) 4612663

Fax: (962-6) 4612663

Web-site: www.jfda.jo

Ministry of Industry and Trade

Tel: (962-6) 560-7191/5663774

Fax: (962-6) 560-4691

Web-site: www.mit.gov.jo

Ministry of Agriculture

Veterinary Services Directorate

OR

Plant Protection Directorate

Tel: (962-6) 5686151

Fax: (962-6) 5686310

Web-site: www.moa.gov.jo

Jordan Institute of Standards and Metrology

Tel: (962-6) 5680139

Fax: (962-6) 5681099

Web-site: www.jism.gov.jo

Jordan Customs Department

P.O.Box 90, Amman, Jordan

Tel: (962-6) 462-3186/8; 462-4394/6

Fax: (962-6) 464-7791

E-mail: Customs@Customs.gov.jo

Web-site: <http://www.customs.gov.jo>

Ministry of Environment

Tel: + (962-6) 5560113

Fax: + (962-6) 5560288

Web-site: <http://www.moenv.gov.jo/>

Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority

P.O.Box 2565, Aqaba 77110, Jordan

Tel: + (962-6) 3 203 5757/8

Fax: + (962-6) 3 203 0912

Web-site: <http://www.aqabazone.com/>

Appendix II. Other Import Specialist Contacts:

For further help, please contact the Office of Agricultural Affairs, American Embassy, PO Box 354, Amman, Jordan, Phone: +(962-6) 5906056, Fax: +(962-6) 5906223, E-Mail: AgAmman@fas.usda.gov - Mohamed.khraishy@usda.gov - khraishym@state.gov

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